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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes the sources of income and the income problems of black families in the nonmetropolitan South based on 1980 data. It also describes some characteristics of family householders and adult family members related to income-earning capacity, such as age, education, work disability, labor force status, occupation, and weeks worked. To illustrate how the characteristics of these families differ from or coincide with those of the majority of southern nonmetropolitan families, the report compares blacks and whites by poverty status and family type. Black families are three times as likely to be poor as white families. Southern nonmetropolitan black families, especially female householder families, continue to have a high incidence of poverty. Black family members had much higher unemployment rates than did whites in all poverty status and family type categories. Factors associated with poverty among black families include low educational attainment, high unemployment rates, young or old age, low-wage occupations, lack of participation in the labor force, and lack of employment opportunities. Measures to help solve the poverty problem include: (1) increased and improved schooling; (2) economic development programs such as enterprise zones; (3) job training; (4) daycare for preschool children of single parents; and (5) improvements in public assistance programs. Statistical charts are included. (ETS)

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Economic Research Service

Rural Development Research Report Number 62

Poverty Among Black Families in the Nonmetro South

Linda M. Ghelfi

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Poverty Among Black Families in the Nonmetro South. By Linda M. Ghelfi, Agriculture and Rural Economics Division. Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Rural Development Research Report No. 62.

Abstract

Nearly all black families in nonmetro areas live in the South. There they have a higher poverty rate than black families in other regions; 35 percent had incomes below the poverty threshold in 1979. Poverty is particularly prevalent among black families in the nonmetro South with a female householder—56 percent of them were poor in 1979. Income problems of these families and of their poor white counterparts appear to be related to factors such as low levels of education, young or old age, and work disabilities. Those poor black family members who are employed are concentrated in low-wage jobs.

Keywords: Blacks, black families, nonmetropolitan, poverty, South.

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The author thanks Priscilla Salant, Thomas Carlin, Robert Hoppe, Peggy Ross, Leslie Whitener, John Crecink, and Olaf Larson for their critical reviews of this manuscript. Thanks also to Gerald Wheelock for the special tabulations from the 1890 Land Grant Institutions' survey of low-income rural areas of the South.

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Summary

There were 1.1 million black families living in nonmetro areas in 1980, 1 million (93 percent) of whom lived in the South. Thirty-five percent of these southern nonmetro black families had incomes below the poverty threshold. Poverty is an even greater problem among black female householder families in the nonmetro South, 56 percent of whom had incomes below the poverty threshold. These poverty rates rival those for families in any central city of any metropolitan area.

This report examines human capital characteristics and labor-force participation of poor black family householders and other adult members of these families.

Poor black householders in the nonmetro South do not have high levels of marketable skills. Black female householders are generally young and have not completed high school. One-third of them care for preschool-age children. On the other hand, nearly one-third of the poor "other" (married-couple and male, no wife present) family householders were 65 years old or older and 82 percent had not completed high school. Despite these work-inhibiting problems, earnings are still the largest source of income for the poor.

In the nonmetro South, nearly 20 percent of poor black female family householders in the labor force were unemployed. The "other" poor black householders had a 9.3-percent unemployment rate. Poor householders had unemployment rates well above those of their nonpoor counterparts. These unemployment rates may reflect the low level of skills among the poor black householders as well as the lack of employment opportunities in their communities.

Only in educational attainment, unemployment rate, and occupational distribution are there major differences between poor black and white householders in the nonmetro South. Black householders completed fewer years of school, had higher unemployment rates, and were more concentrated in lower wage service and operator, fabricator, and laborer occupations.

The income status of families also depends on the contributions of family members other than the householder. But the human capital characteristics of these members of poor black families in the nonmetro South show low levels of marketable skills.

Additional education, work-related training, increased employment opportunities, daycare for preschool children of single parents, and increased child support from absent parents are possible ways to decrease the poverty problem among these black families.

Glossary

Adult. Persons 16 years old and older.

Central city. The largest city, or one of the largest cities, in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA).

Disability. Work limiting—a health condition lasting 6 months or longer which limits the kind or amount of work a person can perform. A person is limited in the kind of work he or she can do if the health condition restricts the choice of a job. A person is limited in the amount of work if he or she cannot work full time (35 or more hours per week). ***Work preventing***—a health condition which prevents a person from working.

1890 Land Grant Institutions. The historically black colleges established through the Morrill Act of 1890. The 1890 Land Grant Institutions that cooperated on the survey cited in this report are Alabama A&M University; University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff; Florida A&M University; Fort Valley State College (Georgia); Kentucky State University; Alcorn State University (Mississippi); North Carolina A&T State University; South Carolina State College; Tennessee State University; and Virginia State University.

Family. Two or more persons, including the householder, who are related by blood, marriage, or legal adoption, and who live together as one household. If the son or daughter of the householder and the son's or daughter's spouse and/or children are members of the household, they are included in the householder's family. A roomer or boarder and his/her spouse who are not related to the householder are not counted as a family, but as individuals unrelated to the householder.

Family type. Classification of families by the marital status and sex of the householder, and the presence of the householder's spouse. This report analyzes female householder families with no husband present and "other" householder families. ***"Other"*** includes married-couple families and male householder, no wife present, families.

Householder. The person reported in column one of the 1980 Census of Population and Housing form. This was to be the person in whose name the home was owned or rented. If there was no such person, any household member at least 15 years old who was not a roomer, boarder, or paid employee could be reported.

Income. Total money income reported from wages and salaries; nonfarm self-employment; farm self-employment; interest, dividends, and net rentals; Social Security; public assistance; and all other regularly received sources.

Labor-force status. In the labor force—persons 16 years old and older who were either employed or unemployed during the reference week of the census.

Employed—persons 16 years old and older who were members of the armed forces or had a job in the civilian labor force during the reference week.

Unemployed—persons 16 years old and older who were not in the

armed forces and did not have a civilian job, but were actively seeking employment during the reference week.
Not in the labor force—persons 16 years old and older who were not in the armed forces, did not have a civilian job, and were not seeking employment during the reference week.
Unemployment rate—total unemployed divided by total in the labor force.

Metro. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). Includes counties containing a city of 50,000 or more people or a city of 25,000 or more people if the city population plus that of contiguous thickly populated places equals 50,000 or more. Additional contiguous counties are included if they are economically and socially integrated with the central city.

Nonmetro. Counties which are not metro.

Poor. Families whose 1979 income was less than the poverty threshold specified for their family size, age of householder, and number of children under 18 years old.

Poverty threshold. Income cutoff used to determine poverty status. The income cutoffs vary by family size, number of children, and age of the family householder or unrelated individual. The poverty thresholds used in this study are those published by the Bureau of the Census (36). For example, the poverty threshold for a family of four in 1979 was an annual income of $7,412.

Race. Families are identified by the race of the householder.

Region. Northeast—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
Midwest (formerly North Central)—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.
South—Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.
West—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Rural. Places populated with fewer than 2,500 people.

Unrelated individual. A householder living alone; a roomer, boarder, partner, roommate, or resident employee not related to the householder; or a person living in group quarters who is not an inmate of an institution. Persons living with one or more relatives in a household where the householder is not related to any of them are classified in the census as unrelated individuals.

Urban. Places populated with 2,500 or more people. Urban is not synonymous with metro. One can be both nonmetro and urban. For example, a person living in a city of 2,500 or more inhabitants in a county outside an SMSA is both nonmetro and urban.

Working-age. Persons 16 to 64 years old.

Poverty Among Black Families in the Nonmetro South

Linda M. Ghelfi*

Introduction

The migration of blacks from the South to the North and from rural to urban areas has drastically changed the geographic distribution of the black population since World War I.[1] From a predominantly rural South population, 80 percent of blacks now live in metro areas and 50 percent live outside the South. Despite this migration, 1 million black families lived in the nonmetro South in 1980. Thirty-five percent of them had incomes below the poverty threshold, a poverty rate which rivals that for families in any central city of any metro area.[2]

This report profiles poor black families in the nonmetro South. Data were computed from the 1980 Census of Population and Housing, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), a 1-percent sample of the population that permits detailed analysis of the population living in nonmetro areas (35).[3,4] While similar data for more recent years are not available, the general characteristics reported here probably still exist.

This report analyzes the sources of income and the income problems of black families in the nonmetro South. It also describes some characteristics of family householders and adult family members related to income-earning capacity, such as age, education, work disability, labor-force status, occupation, and weeks worked. To illustrate how the characteristics of these families differ from or coincide with those of the majority of southern nonmetro families, this report compares blacks and whites by poverty status and family type.

Background

This section provides perspective for the PUMS information. It outlines the changes in the geographic distribution of the U.S. black population since World War I. It also places poor black families in the nonmetro South in national perspective and presents related research findings on poverty among black families.

Black Residence and Migration Patterns, 1790 to 1980[5]

During 1790-1910, 90 percent of all blacks lived in the South. But this percentage began to decline after 1910 as blacks migrated to the North during World War I. By 1940, only 75 percent of all blacks resided in the South. At that time, the migration stream broadened to include a substantial flow to the West, particularly to California. The percentage of blacks living in the South dropped to 50 percent by 1970, a trend that leveled off to 52 percent by 1980 (34).

The black migration was not only out of the South, but also from rural areas to urban areas. In 1890 (the first census to record rural-urban residence for blacks), 80 percent of all blacks lived in rural areas. By 1970, the situation was completely reversed—80 percent lived in urban areas. Most of this urbanization occurred after 1940, fed by the large influx of blacks to northern cities from southern rural areas. In 1980, 85 percent of the black population lived in urban areas (34).

Many blacks moved northward for economic opportunities in large northern cities; to escape from

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[1]Terms such as the South, poverty, family, householder, and others are those used by the Bureau of the Census and are defined in the Glossary.

[2]The poverty thresholds in this report are those used by the Bureau of the Census. The poverty threshold for a family of four in 1979 was an income of $7,412.

[3]Italicized numbers in parentheses refer to items in the References section.

[4]Information on the PUMS computer data tape and estimates of error for the data tabulated from it are presented in the Data Source and Reliability section.

[5]Except for 1980 data, all information in this section was obtained from (38).

racial discrimination and segregation; or for employment because agricultural mechanization or depression left many southern agricultural workers unemployed.

Whatever the causes of migration prior to 1970, a new black migration pattern has emerged. Since 1970, the South has experienced a decline in the volume of black outmigration along with an increase in black inmigration. From 1970 to 1975, the number of black inmigrants was about the same as the number of black outmigrants (302,000 entered the South while 288,000 left).

Geographic Distribution of the Black Population in 1980

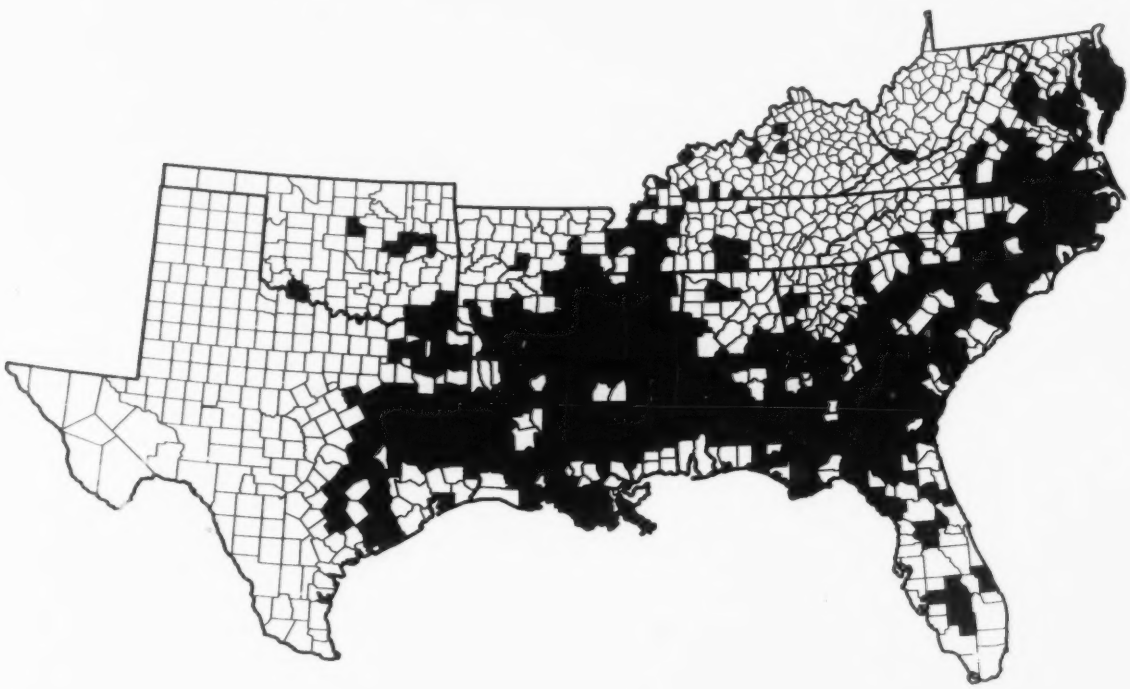
In 1980, 93 percent of blacks living in nonmetro areas resided in the South. The distribution of nonmetro blacks is geographically concentrated (as measured by the percentage of county population which is black) along the Southeast Coastal Plain, across Georgia and Alabama, and up through the Mississippi Delta (fig. 1). The pattern also extends west across Louisiana into east Texas.

Nearly all nonmetro counties with 10 percent or more blacks are in the South. Only 10 of these counties are in the Midwest, 6 of which are in Missouri and Illinois bordering the Southern States. No nonmetro counties in the Northeast or West are comprised of 10 percent or more blacks. Virtually all blacks outside the South live in metro areas.

Figure 2 shows the residential distribution of black families. (The metro-nonmetro breakdown is shown only for the South because there are so few blacks in nonmetro areas outside the South.) In 1980, 1 million black families lived in the nonmetro South—almost twice the number of all black families living in the West (0.5 million) and somewhat less than those in the Northeast and

Figure 1

Counties in the nonmetro South with at least 10 percent black population, 1980



Source: Computed from (*37*).

Midwest, 1.1 and 1.2 million, respectively. However, more black families live in the metro South than in any other area, 2.2 million.

Poor black families by region and residence are also shown in figure 2. Poverty is more prevalent among black families in the nonmetro South than in any other area. Although the nonmetro South contains only 16.7 percent of all black families, it contains 22.2 percent of poor black families. The other areas have a lower percentage of poor black families than of total black families (see app. table 1 for a breakdown of poverty rates by region and residence).

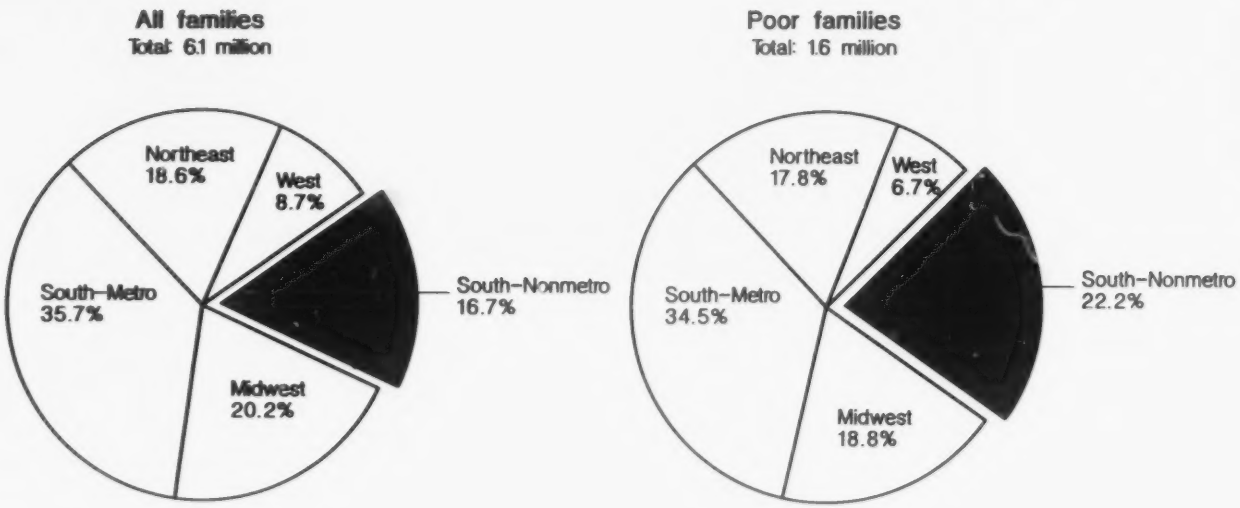
Aspects of Poverty

Most personal income in the United States is earned through wages and salaries; research on the causes of poverty has thus concentrated on work-related characteristics of the poor and on the labor markets in which they work (*2, 9, 12, 13, 26*). Causes of poverty are generally grouped into three categories: work-related characteristics (human capital) of the poor; the availability of employment and wage rates in local labor markets; and discrimination. The combination of these factors may also determine the persistence of poverty in a population group, such as blacks, or in a geographic area, such as the nonmetro South.

Human Capital. Human capital, the skills and abilities marketable as labor, is usually measured according to the years of schooling completed. Although other measures such as years of work experience, on-the-job training, aptitude test scores, and indicators of motivation have been used, education is the most available measure and usually shows a strong relationship to income (*9, 26*). The lower educational attainment of the poor is then interpreted as a cause of their low-paying jobs and low incomes.

Figure 2

Black families by region and residence, 1980



Source: (*34*).

Disability, family type, and age are other facets of human capital that may restrict employment. Physical or mental disabilities which limit the amount or kind of work a person can perform restrict income-generating opportunities. The presence of preschool-age children may restrict the ability of one parent to work. For single-parent households, this may mean that there is no adult able to earn income. If the single parent has few job skills (little other human capital), he or she may not be able to pay for child care and support the family as well. The employment disadvantages of advanced age also limit many people's earnings. For example, forced retirement and retirement due to health problems keep many older family members from earning income.

The population in the nonmetro South, especially nonmetro blacks, has been found to have low levels of human capital. A study of four rural southern counties found that many blacks had low levels of education, little formal job training, little work experience, or had work-inhibiting health problems (*26*). Another study of southern blacks during the sixties found that plantation agriculture, poor health, and poor educational systems ill-prepared rural blacks for nonfarm jobs (*19*). However, a more recent study reported that the education levels of nonmetro blacks have increased, although they still lag behind those of whites and metro blacks (*14*).

Local Labor Markets. Characteristics of local labor markets are also related to poverty. These factors include the wage level of available jobs, the number of jobs available compared to the number of persons seeking employment, and the opportunity for promotion to better paying jobs. High levels of unemployment and numbers of able persons not in the labor force (not seeking employment) are seen as symptoms of deficient demand for labor (*28*).

Jobs which provide enough income to raise a family above the poverty threshold may be scarce if local labor markets primarily provide employment in occupations with low wages and little opportunity for advancement. Low-wage occupations include farm laborers, service workers, general laborers, and many clerical and retail sales personnel.

The nonmetro South has become increasingly industrialized since World War II. However, economic growth was not evenly distributed across the region. A study found that during the sixties, industries bypassed southern rural areas with large black populations (*32*). A review of case studies of industrial plants locating in nonmetro areas from 1945 to 1974 found that minorities were underrepresented in these firms, and where they were employed, it was in unskilled and semiskilled jobs (*30*). This employment pattern could be due to discrimination in hiring, lack of skills among local minorities, or both (*30*).

More recently, the 1890 Land Grant Institutions conducted a household survey in a sample of low-income counties in the rural South (*12*). Over half of the householders (53 percent) cited limited job opportunities as a serious problem in securing employment. Another 34 percent said that limited opportunities were somewhat a problem. Most of the respondents also felt there were not enough job opportunities for the young people in their communities.

Discrimination. Discrimination is also perceived to cause poverty (*19, 23, 26, 28*). Discrimination against minorities may prevent them from obtaining the education necessary to obtain employment and limit their opportunities for employment. Discrimination in education and job training in the sixties was found to be so pervasive among southern nonmetro blacks that it was hard to judge the effect of these factors on their employment (*19*). There was some evidence, however, that the situation in the early seventies was changing, and southern blacks started to obtain jobs with potential for upward mobility (*19*).

Unpublished tabulations from the 1890 Land Grant Institutions' survey provide information on whether the elderly, women, and blacks in low-income areas of the rural South feel that discrimination by age, sex, or race is a problem in obtaining employment.[e] Seventeen percent of householders over 60 years old felt age discrimination was a serious problem in obtaining employment. Combined with the 39 percent who felt it was somewhat of a problem, 56 percent of older householders thought age discrimination negatively affected employment opportunities. Fifteen percent of female householders believed that sex discrimination was a serious problem in obtaining employment, and another 35 percent thought it was somewhat of a problem.

Thirty-two percent of black householders viewed racial discrimination as a serious employment problem. Added to the 40 percent of black householders who saw racial discrimination as somewhat of a problem, nearly 75 percent of black householders felt discrimination negatively affected employment opportunities.

[e]These special tabulations of discrimination by householder characteristics were provided by Dr. Gerald Wheelock, Alabama A&M University. See (*12*) for published data from the survey.

A larger percentage of older black female householders found each type of discrimination to be a serious problem than did any other age-race-sex category of householders, indicating that these types of discrimination may have cumulative effects. Younger white males were the least likely to see any type of discrimination as an employment problem.

Persistence of Poverty. Persistence, or duration, is another aspect of poverty in the nonmetro South. Although the profile of the poor changes little from year to year, the poverty status of particular families changes.[7] Only slightly more than half of the people with incomes below the poverty level in one year were poor the next year (9). Considerably less than half of those who experience poverty remain persistently poor over many years. However, the incidence of persistent poverty was highest among blacks, the elderly, rural residents, and people living in the South (9). Persistent poverty was particularly high among black female householder families. Southern nonmetro blacks are at high risk of being persistently poor because they fall into many of these categories.

Economic Research Service studies show that counties with per capita incomes which persistently ranked in the bottom quintile of nonmetro counties from 1969 to 1979 were located predominantly in the South (7, 15). These "persistently low-income counties" had higher percentages of minorities and were more dependent on extractive industries (such as mining and agriculture) for employment than were other nonmetro counties.

These studies document the income and employment problems of the rural South's population, particularly for the black population and members of female householder families. This report further details the income and poverty status of black families in the nonmetro South. Although there are also income problems among unrelated individuals, this report examines only families.[8]

Families in the Nonmetro South

The remainder of this report concentrates solely on families in the nonmetro South. All data and analysis refer only to that geographic area. Within the nonmetro South, families are classified by family type and race.

[7]This study of poverty over time is based on data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan (9).

[8]The proportion of the nonmetro South population living in families is shown in app. table 2.

Family Types

Families are classified by the marital status and sex of the householder. Married couples are the predominant type of family for both blacks and whites (table 1). However, black families are more likely to be headed by a female with no husband present. Female householder families represent 32 percent of all black families, compared with only 9 percent of white families.

Poverty is more prevalent among black families than white families; black families are three times as likely to be poor as white families. Poverty is also more prevalent among female householder families, particularly among blacks. About half of poor black families are headed by women with no husband present. Thus, information on black and white families will be analyzed using two groupings. Female householder families constitute one group. The group referred to as "other" householder families includes married-couple families and families with a male householder, no wife present. This "other" group has mostly male householders, although some married couples reported the wife as the householder.

Data Source and Reliability

The data presented were computed from the 1-percent Public Use Microdata Sample of the 1980 Census of Population and Housing for metro and nonmetro areas (35). This sample is the most comprehensive data available on nonmetro residents. Although it provides the most accurate estimates

Table 1—Families in the nonmetro South by race, type of householder, and poverty status, 1980

Race and type of family	All families		Poor families	
	Number	Percentage of total	Number	Percentage poor
	Thousand	*Percent*	*Thousand*	*Percent*
Total black families	1,019.5	100.0	360.8	35.4
Married couple	639.1	62.7	163.2	25.5
Male householder, no wife present	54.9	5.4	17.8	32.4
Female householder, no husband present	325.5	31.9	179.8	55.2
Total white families	5,599.5	100.0	668.4	11.9
Married couple	4,954.1	88.5	507.2	10.2
Male householder, no wife present	143.4	2.6	22.1	15.4
Female householder, no husband present	502.0	9.0	139.1	27.7

Source: Computed from (35).

obtainable for the entire population, it is still subject to errors of estimate.

Standard errors and confidence intervals were computed for the totals and percentages reported. The standard errors were computed directly from the sample, using the 100 random groups method (36). Differences in percentages between poor and nonpoor families and between black and white families were also tested for statistical significance. All differences reported in the text are statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level or better.

Wherever comparable, the numbers reported have been checked against published census data [the estimates reported here are very close to estimates of the same characteristics reported in (33 and 34)].

Family Income

Factors underlying income differences must be understood in order to identify policies that might increase the income of the poor. This section explores how much additional income it would take to raise poor families above the poverty threshold; the sources of their income, including the level of their dependence upon public assistance; and which family members contribute to family income.

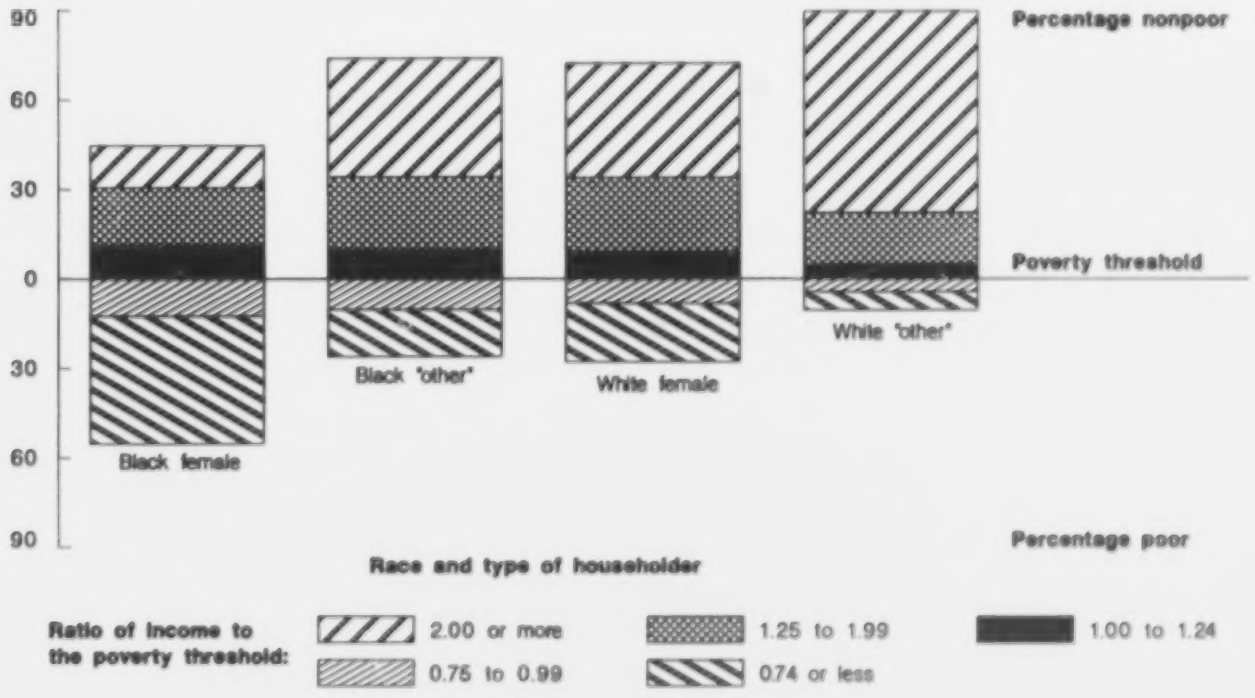
Ratio of Family Income to the Poverty Threshold

One measure used to express the relative poverty status of a family is the ratio of total family income to the poverty threshold. Black and white families by type of householder are distributed according to this ratio in figure 3. The low-income position of black female householder families is striking: 55 percent have incomes below the poverty threshold. Nearly 43 percent have incomes below 75 percent of the poverty threshold—incomes of these families would have to be increased by at least 33 percent just to reach the poverty threshold.

Incomes of black "other" householder families and white female householder families were similarly

Figure 3

Ratio of family income to the poverty threshold, nonmetro South, 1979



Source: Computed from (35).

distributed in relation to the poverty threshold. A little more than 25 percent of each group falls below the poverty threshold. The white "other" householder families are significantly less likely to be poor than any other group: only 12 percent are below the poverty threshold, while 65 percent have incomes two or more times the threshold.

Amount and Sources of Income

Family income includes earned income from wages, salaries, and self-employment and unearned income from dividends, interest, and net rentals; Social Security; public assistance; and other sources. The other unearned income category includes alimony, child support, and any other regularly received cash income not elsewhere classified.

The median incomes of black and white poor families are about equal, but the median income of nonpoor black families is about $3,600 lower than that of nonpoor white families (table 2). White families are twice as likely as black families to have incomes over $20,000.

Earned income from wages, salaries, and self-employment is the largest source of income for each category of families, poor and nonpoor alike (fig. 4). Earned income accounts for about 85 percent of the income in nonpoor "other" householder

Table 2—Family income, nonmetro South, 1979

Race and income	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black families	179.8	145.7	181.0	513.0	360.8	658.7	1,019.5
				Percent			
Income:							
Less than $2,500	36.7	—	22.5	—	29.5	—	10.5
$2,500-$4,999	38.2	2.9	38.2	1.3	38.2	1.6	14.6
$5,000-$7,499	16.6	20.0	22.5	8.7	19.5	11.2	14.1
$7,500-$9,999	6.4	20.7	11.2	10.9	8.8	13.0	11.5
$10,000-$19,999	2.2	44.4	5.6	48.2	3.9	47.4	32.0
$20,000-$29,999	—	8.6	—	21.9	—	18.9	12.2
$30,000 or more	—	3.4	—	9.1	—	7.8	5.1
				Dollars			
Median family income	3,375	10,109	4,299	15,465	3,839	14,349	9,851
				Number			
Average family size	4.2	3.6	4.4	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.1
				Thousand			
White families	139.1	362.9	529.3	4,568.2	668.4	4,931.1	5,599.5
				Percent			
Income:							
Less than $2,500	33.9	—	26.0	—	27.6	—	3.3
$2,500-$4,999	49.1	1.8	44.7	.8	45.6	.9	6.2
$5,000-$7,499	14.2	17.7	20.5	6.4	19.2	7.2	8.6
$7,500-$9,999	2.6	19.9	7.4	8.7	6.3	9.6	9.2
$10,000-$19,999	.3	44.2	1.5	39.8	1.2	40.1	35.5
$20,000-$29,999	—	11.5	—	27.1	—	25.9	22.8
$30,000 or more	—	4.9	—	17.2	—	16.3	14.4
				Dollars			
Median family income	3,324	11,825	3,644	16,543	3,726	17,984	16,226
				Number			
Average family size	3.2	2.7	3.5	3.1	3.4	3.1	3.2

— = No families in this income category.
Source: Computed from (35).

families. Poor families obtain a lower percentage of their income from earnings than do the nonpoor, and among poor families, female householder families receive the lowest percentage of their income from earnings.

Poor families receive a considerably larger portion of income from Social Security and public assistance than do nonpoor families. Poor female householder families receive about 25 percent of their income from public assistance, while poor "other" families are more dependent upon Social Security income than public assistance.[9]

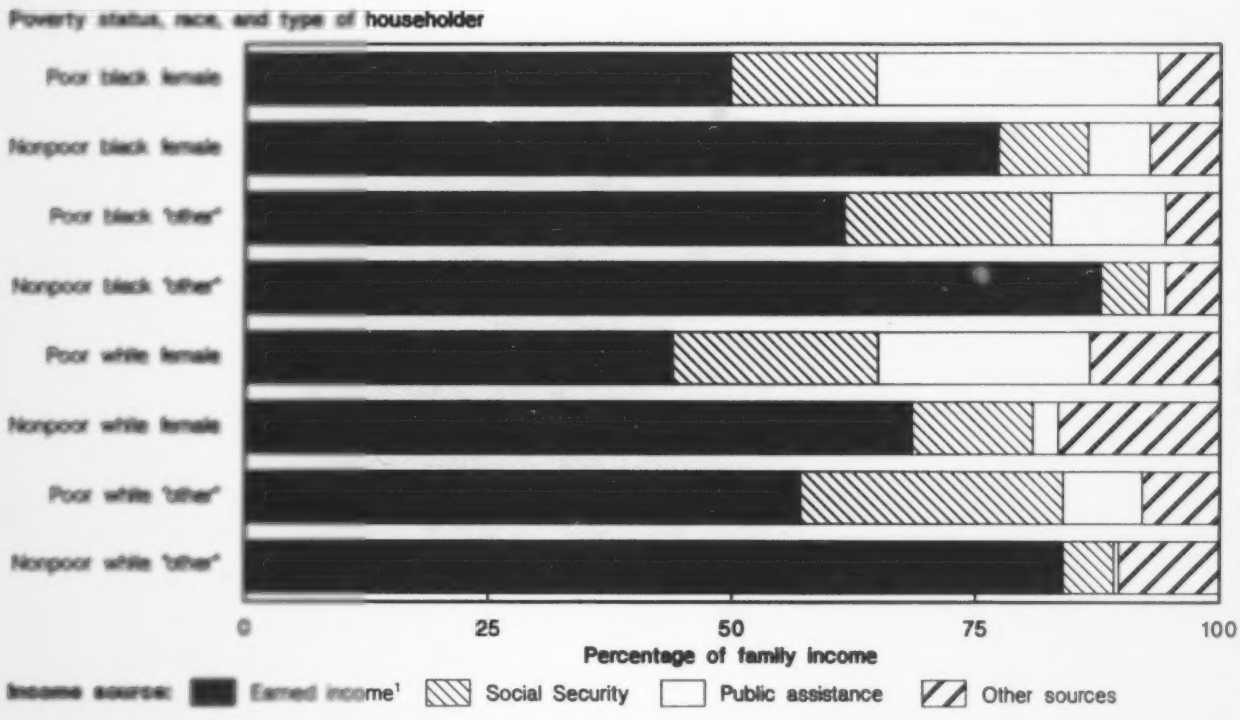
Dependence on Public Assistance

While public assistance makes up 25 percent or less of the income of the poor, some poor families depend on this income source much more than others. Table 3 examines this dependence in more detail by showing the ratio of cash public assistance to total family income.[10] Over half of poor black families reported receiving no public assistance in 1979. Female householder families were more likely to report some cash assistance largely because Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the largest such program, is designed to assist this population. Poor black families are more likely to receive cash assistance than are white families, and poor black female householder families had the highest degree of dependence. Many nonpoor black female householder families (33 percent) receive some public assistance. This assistance may be the margin of income they need to stay out of poverty

[9]Percentages of income by source refer to the combined income of families within each group. However, not all families in each group receive income from all sources. The percentages of families receiving income from each source are shown in app. table 3.

[10]Other Government assistance programs provide in-kind benefits to the poor. Food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance are the largest of these programs. The PUMS data, which cover only cash income, do not include the value of these programs' benefits to recipients.

Figure 4
Sources of income for families in the nonmetro South, 1979



[1] Includes wages, salary, and self-employment income.
Source: Computed from (28).

Table 3—Family dependence on public assistance, nonmetro South, 1979

Race and dependence on public assistance	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
			Thousand				
Black families	179.8	145.7	181.0	513.0	360.8	658.7	1,019.5
			Percent				
Percentage of income from public assistance:							
100.0	19.4	1.2	5.0	.2	12.2	.4	4.6
25.0-99.9	24.5	9.8	14.3	3.2	19.3	4.6	9.9
0.1-24.9	11.3	22.2	10.5	9.9	10.9	12.6	12.0
0	44.8	66.8	70.1	86.7	57.5	82.3	73.5
			Thousand				
White families	139.1	362.9	529.3	4,568.2	668.4	4,931.1	5,599.5
			Percent				
Percentage of income from public assistance:							
100.0	14.2	.4	3.4	.1	5.6	.1	.8
25.0-99.9	15.7	5.4	7.6	1.1	9.3	1.4	2.4
0.1-24.9	8.1	9.3	6.8	2.9	7.1	3.4	3.8
0	61.9	84.9	82.1	95.9	77.9	95.1	93.0

Source: Computed from (35).

because even with the public assistance, many of these families are very close to the poverty threshold (fig. 3).

Family Member Contributions to Income

Family income, as measured by the Bureau of the Census, includes the incomes of all family members at least 16 years old. The low level of income in poor female householder families appears to be at least partially due to small contributions of members other than the householder (table 4). Nonpoor female householder families report much larger contributions by family members to family income. Half of nonpoor black female householder families' income is provided by members other than the householder. Income of members other than the householder is less significant in explaining income differences between poor and nonpoor "other" householder families.

While these data show the low-income position of black female householder families and differences in income levels, sources, and distributions among all the family types, they do not explain factors that contribute to these observed differences. Variations in human capital, deficient demand for labor in local labor markets, and race and sex discrimination may all contribute to income differences. While human capital characteristics are examined in this report, the PUMS data only inferentially provide any indications of labor-market conditions and discrimination.

Human Capital of Black Family Householders

Age, education, work disabilities, and caring for preschool-age children affect the ability of householders to participate in the labor force. In this section, these human capital characteristics of black family householders are compared by family type and poverty status. Data for white householders are presented in the tables and graphs throughout the section. Comparisons of the characteristics of black and white householders are discussed only in the last subsection.

Age

Age indicates where a person is in the income-earning cycle. The prime age for earning income ranges from 25 to 64. Those younger than 25 usually have little job experience or seniority, which results in lower earnings. Most of those age 65 and older are retired and earn little or no wages or salary. The distribution of black householders by age shows that 12 percent of poor female householders are under 25 years old, three times the percentage of nonpoor female householders under

Table 4—Family members' contributions to family income, nonmetro South, 1979

Race and income provided by family members	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Million dollars			
Black family income	658.9	1,896.1	844.6	9,009.8	1,503.5	10,905.9	12,409.4
				Percent			
Percentage contributed by:							
Householder	71.3	49.3	64.2	57.6	67.3	56.1	57.5
Spouse	NA	NA	22.5	27.2	12.7	22.5	21.3
Other adult family members[1]	28.7	50.7	13.3	15.2	20.0	21.4	21.2
				Number			
Average number of adult family members, including householders and spouses	2.0	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.7	2.6
				Million dollars			
White family income	454.7	5,038.8	2,014.0	96,178.9	2,468.7	101,217.8	103,686.5
				Percent			
Percentage contributed by:							
Householder	80.0	59.8	71.3	72.7	72.9	72.1	72.1
Spouse	NA	NA	21.2	20.9	17.3	19.9	19.8
Other adult family members[1]	20.0	40.2	7.5	6.4	9.8	8.1	8.1
				Number			
Average number of adult family members, including householders and spouses	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3

NA = Not applicable.
[1]16 years old and older.
Source: Computed from (35).

25 (fig. 5). The poor black "other" householders are more concentrated at the opposite end of the age distribution—29 percent were at least 65 years old. This compares with 15 percent age 65 and older among nonpoor black "other" family householders.

These distributions are reflected in the median age of each group of black householders. Poor black female householders are the youngest, with a median age of 39.8 years, while poor black "other" householders are the oldest, with a median age of 51.8 years.

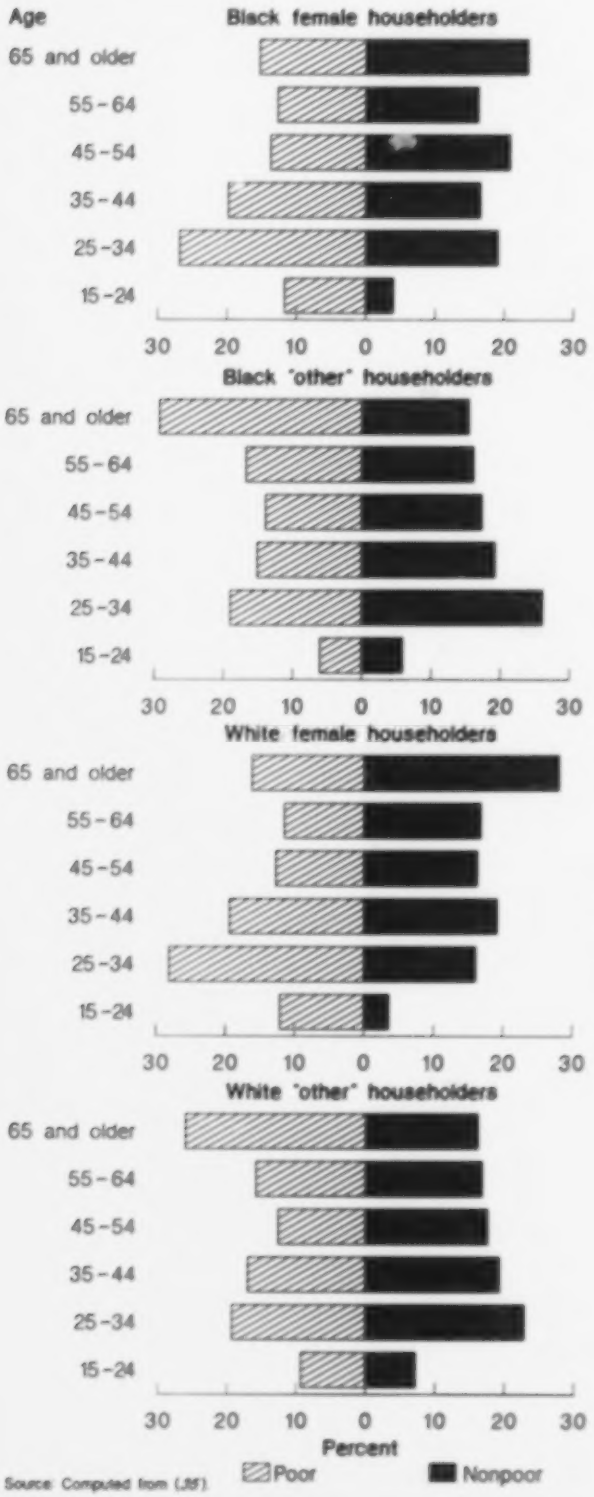
Education

Along with age, years of schooling completed indicate employment and income-earning potential. Most poor black householders have not completed high school, increasingly a minimum requirement for obtaining employment today. Figure 6 uses high school graduation as the reference point of educational attainment. The most dramatic disparity appears in the distribution of poor black "other" householders—nearly 30 percent have not completed 5 years of elementary school, and only 20 percent have completed high school.

Education levels of nonmetro blacks have risen dramatically since the seventies, but prior to then they had very low levels of education (14). This helps explain the low median education of the poor "other" family householders (7.7 years), in that many of the "other" householders are older, and their schooling occurred during a time when nonmetro blacks did not obtain many years of education.

The recent rise in education levels also helps explain the much higher education levels of poor black female householders relative to poor black "other" householders. Because these female householders are, on average, younger, they have completed more years of school. However, their median education still lagged about half a year behind that of nonpoor black female householders (9.6 versus 10.2 years, respectively).

Figure 5
Age distribution of family householders, nonmetro South, 1980



Source: Computed from (JSF).

Work Disability

Income-earning capacity is also affected by disabilities which restrict the amount or kind of work one can perform (limiting disability). Those who are prevented by a disability from doing any kind of work have no earning capacity. Of all groups, the poor black "other" householders (16 to 64 years old) were most affected by disability: over 15 percent were prevented from working and another 9 percent had a work-limiting disability (table 5). In contrast, only 6 percent of nonpoor "other" family householders report a work-preventing disability.

Work disability is not a large factor in explaining poverty status among working-age female householders. Over 10 percent of both poor and nonpoor female householders reported work-preventing disabilities. A lower percentage of each group reported a work-limiting disability.

Single Parents with Preschool Children

Child care, particularly for preschool children, can affect a householder's availability for work by inhibiting single parents from entering the labor force or working full time. About 33 percent of poor black female householders are single parents with one or more children under 6 years old (table 6). Only 11 percent of nonpoor female householders have children under 6. Since most of the "other" householders are married, this group contains few male single parents, and few of them have custody of children under 6 years old.

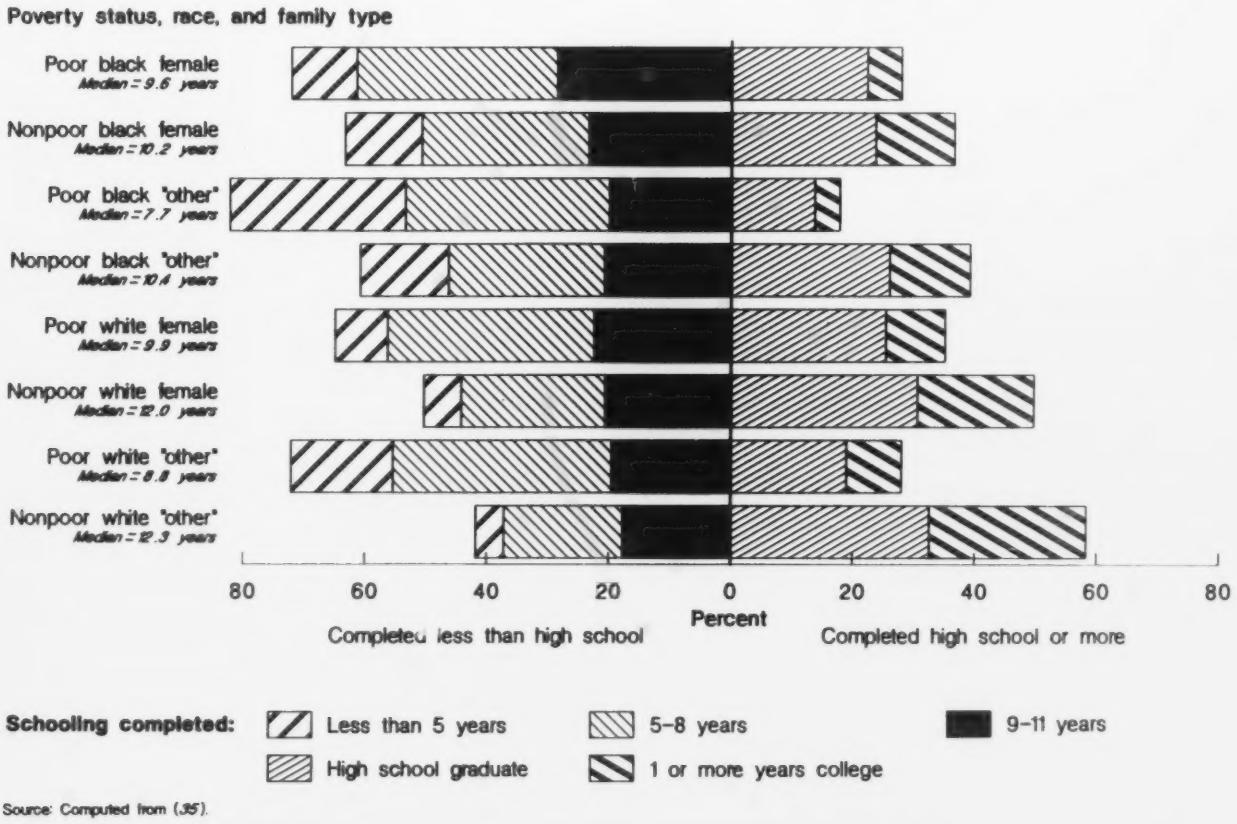
Preschool children may pose no employment problem for persons who earn wages high enough to pay for daycare or for persons with relatives willing to care for the children while the householder works, but many of the poor may not have either of these arrangements. It is doubtful that most poor female householders could pay for daycare and still earn enough to support the family. This is a particular problem for young black women who have neither the education or training nor the work experience necessary to obtain higher paying jobs.

Comparison with White Family Householders

Poor black female householders are generally younger than nonpoor female householders. They are also much more likely than the nonpoor to have children under 6 years old. On the other hand, poor black "other" householders are older and more likely to have work-preventing disabilities than are the nonpoor "other" householders. Although some

Figure 6

Education of family householders in the nonmetro South, 1980



Source: Computed from (35).

of the percentages vary slightly, the distributions of poor and nonpoor white householders by age, disability, and care of preschool children closely resemble those of their black counterparts (fig. 5, tables 5 and 6).

However, there are differences in the years of schooling completed by black and white householders. White householders have completed more years of schooling than have black householders (fig. 6). There is little difference in median education between poor black and white female householders. However, median education of nonpoor black householders is nearly 2 years lower than that of nonpoor white householders.

Although the other characteristics do not vary much by race within poor and nonpoor categories, these similarities among southern nonmetro black and white householders by poverty status should not overshadow the fact that poverty is much more prevalent among blacks. Black families in the nonmetro South are three times as likely to be poor as are white families. Although poor blacks and whites have similar age, disability, and work-related characteristics, poor families constitute a much larger percentage of black families than of white families. (In each table, the percentages in the "All families—Total" column are closer to the percentages in the "All families—Poor" column for black householders than they are for white householders.)

Labor-Force Status and Employment of Black Family Householders

Human capital characteristics show the potentially marketable skills of the householders and conditions which could limit their employment. Labor-

Table 5—Work disability of working-age family householders, nonmetro South, 1980

Race and work disability	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black householders, 16 to 64 years old	152.2	111.6	128.0	433.9	280.2	545.5	825.7
				Percent			
Work disability:							
None	79.6	84.1	75.8	89.3	77.8	88.2	84.7
Work limiting	7.6	5.2	8.7	5.1	8.1	5.2	6.1
Work preventing	12.8	10.8	15.5	5.6	14.1	6.7	9.2
				Thousand			
White householders, 16 to 64 years old	116.4	260.9	391.7	3,825.7	508.1	4,086.6	4,594.7
				Percent			
Work disability:							
None	77.8	87.4	71.0	88.1	72.6	88.1	86.4
Work limiting	7.2	4.6	10.7	6.0	9.9	5.9	6.3
Work preventing	15.0	7.9	18.3	5.9	17.5	6.0	7.3

Source: Computed from (35).

Table 6—Single parents with preschool children, nonmetro South, 1980

Race, marital status, and presence of preschool children	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black householders	179.8	145.7	181.0	513.0	360.8	658.7	1,019.5
				Percent			
Single parents with child(ren) under 6	32.4	11.2	1.5	1.1	16.9	3.3	8.1
				Thousand			
White householders	139.1	362.9	529.3	4,568.2	668.4	4,931.1	5,599.5
				Percent			
Single parents with child(ren) under 6	29.0	9.1	.6	.2	6.6	.9	1.2

Source: Computed from (35).

force and employment data in this section show the participation of householders in the labor force and the types of jobs they hold. The unemployment rate partially reflects the demand for workers with given job skills. And, the characteristics of nonworking householders provide insight into the potential of these poor family householders to enter the labor force and increase family income.

Labor-Force Status

Labor-force status is the dominant factor in determining income levels because wages and salaries are the largest source of personal income. But limited human capital of poor black householders limits their participation in the labor force. Poor black householders are less likely to be employed or in the labor force than are the nonpoor (table 7).

As expected from their age, education, and disability status, nonpoor black "other" householders have the highest rate of participation in the labor force: 76 percent were employed in 1980 and another 4 percent were unemployed (actively seeking employment). Thus, only 20 percent of nonpoor black "other" householders were not in the labor force. In contrast, 57 percent of poor female householders and 49 percent of poor "other" householders were not in the labor force.

Table 7—Labor-force status of family householders, nonmetro South, 1980

Race and labor-force status	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black householders	179.8	145.7	181.0	513.0	360.8	658.7	1,019.5
				Percent			
Labor-force status:							
In the labor force—							
Employed	34.7	56.4	46.6	76.4	40.7	72.0	60.9
Unemployed	8.5	4.0	4.8	3.6	6.6	3.7	4.7
Not in the labor force	56.8	39.6	48.6	20.0	52.7	24.3	34.4
Unemployment rate[1]	19.7	6.6	9.2	4.6	14.0	4.9	7.2
				Thousand			
White householders	139.1	362.9	529.3	4,568.2	668.4	4,931.1	5,599.5
				Percent			
Labor-force status:							
In the labor force—							
Employed	32.9	55.6	47.8	76.1	44.7	74.6	71.0
Unemployed	6.6	2.3	5.6	2.4	5.8	2.4	2.8
Not in the labor force	60.5	42.1	46.7	21.4	49.6	23.0	26.1
Unemployment rate[1]	16.7	4.0	10.4	3.1	11.4	3.2	3.8

[1]The unemployment rate is total unemployed divided by total in the labor force.
Source: Computed from (35).

Unemployment rates for the various groups may indicate the employability of members of the group as well as the lack of employment opportunities in their communities. Nearly 20 percent of poor female householders in the labor force were unemployed. And, 9.3 percent of poor "other" householders were unemployed. Unemployment rates for nonpoor female and "other" householders were well below those for their poor counterparts.

Occupations of the Employed

Being employed may not always raise a family out of poverty. For example, a full-time worker earning the minimum wage does not earn enough to support a family of four above the poverty threshold. Among the major occupational groups shown in table 8, managerial and professional, and precision production, craft, and repair are the relatively higher wage occupations. Although incomes for technical, sales, and administrative support occupations vary widely, this category contains many low-wage clerical occupations. The service; farming, forestry, and fishing; and operator, fabricator, and laborer classifications contain mostly low-wage jobs.

Black women have historically been employed in service occupations (38). Over half of employed poor female householders worked in service occupations in 1980 (table 8). Along with 27 percent in operator, fabricator, and laborer jobs, and 12 percent in technical, sales, and administrative support positions, these three occupational groups account for nearly 90 percent of poor female householders' occupations.

Employed poor black "other" householders are concentrated in operator, fabricator, and laborer occupations, the historically predominant occupations for black men (38). The 46 percent employed in this group, combined with the 24 percent in farming, forestry, and fishing occupations, account for 70 percent of employment of poor black "other" householders.

Employed nonpoor black householders are also concentrated in lower wage occupations. However, 14 percent of black female householders and 9 percent of black "other" householders are employed in managerial and professional occupations, about three times the percentage of poor black householders employed in these occupations.

Weeks Worked in 1979

Earnings also depend on the duration of employment. Part-time workers could have low earnings in

Table 8—Occupations of employed family householders, nonmetro South, 1980[1]

Race and occupation	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Employed black householders	62.1	82.0	83.3	384.4	145.4	466.4	611.8
				Percent			
Occupation:							
Managerial/professional	4.2	13.8	3.0	8.5	3.5	9.4	8.0
Technical/sales/administrative support	12.1	14.5	3.7	7.0	7.3	8.3	8.1
Service	51.0	34.9	10.7	11.8	27.9	15.9	18.7
Farming/forestry/fishing	3.1	1.9	24.0	7.3	15.1	6.4	8.4
Precision craft/repair/production	3.1	2.3	12.8	19.1	8.7	16.2	14.4
Operators/fabricators/laborers	26.6	32.6	45.7	46.3	37.6	43.8	42.4
				Thousand			
Employed white householders	45.8	200.8	249.6	3,426.0	295.4	3,626.8	3,922.2
				Percent			
Occupation:							
Managerial/professional	7.9	17.9	7.1	19.6	7.2	19.5	18.6
Technical/sales/administrative support	32.8	37.7	9.1	15.9	12.7	17.1	16.8
Service	30.8	15.9	6.2	5.3	10.0	5.9	6.2
Farming/forestry/fishing	.6	.8	23.2	7.7	19.7	7.4	8.3
Precision craft/repair/production	2.2	4.0	25.6	27.0	22.0	25.7	25.4
Operators/fabricators/laborers	25.8	23.7	28.8	24.5	28.3	24.5	24.8

[1]Employed in the civilian labor force.
Source: Computed from (35).

higher wage jobs. Labor-force status and occupation reported by the census are for the week prior to the one in which the respondent completed the census questionnaire (generally the last week of March or the first week of April, 1980). The amount of income families report for the previous year (1979) determines the poverty status of families. Although it is not known whether respondents held the same jobs in 1979 as they did in 1980, data are available on the number of weeks individuals were employed during the previous year.

Twenty-seven percent of poor black householders worked 40 or more weeks in 1979, compared with 65 percent of nonpoor black householders (table 9). This disparity is largely due to the high percentage of the poor family householders who did not work at all. For the poor black householders who did work, the median weeks worked was not much lower than the median weeks worked by nonpoor householders (41.5 and 45.2 weeks, respectively).

Those Not in the Labor Force

The income level of many poor families would be raised if the family head were employed, but many householders are unable to work for a variety of reasons.

Most family householders are not in the labor force because they are 65 years old or older or have a work disability which prevents them from working. Seventy-six percent of poor black "other" householders and 44 percent of poor black female householders not in the labor force meet these criteria (table 10). Nonpoor householders not in the labor force are even more concentrated in these two groups than are their poor counterparts: 81 percent of black "other" and 72 percent of black female householders are aged and/or disabled.

Although 56 percent of poor black female householders not in the labor force are neither aged nor totally disabled, other factors, such as care for preschool children, limited education, or a work-limiting disability, may restrict their employment. Although none of these conditions is an absolute block to employment, they all affect the ability to work, the hours available to work, or the qualifications for occupations. These circumstances, combined with age and total disability, affect all but 6 percent of poor black female householders who are not in the labor force.

About 95 percent of poor black householders not in the labor force have one or more of these characteristics. For many poor black householders,

Table 9—Weeks worked by family householders, nonmetro South, 1979

Race and weeks worked in 1979	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black householders	179.8	145.7	161.0	513.0	360.8	658.7	1,019.5
				Percent			
Weeks worked:							
None	56.4	35.5	49.8	17.3	53.1	21.3	32.6
1-13 weeks	8.7	3.8	5.9	2.7	7.3	2.9	4.5
14-26 weeks	7.2	4.0	6.2	4.2	6.7	4.2	5.1
27-39 weeks	6.1	7.5	6.6	5.8	6.3	6.2	6.2
40-52 weeks	21.6	49.1	31.5	69.9	26.6	65.3	51.6
				Number			
Median weeks for those who worked	39.6	44.5	42.7	45.3	41.5	45.2	44.5
				Thousand			
White householders	139.1	362.9	529.3	4,568.2	668.4	4,931.1	5,599.5
				Percent			
Weeks worked:							
None	58.5	38.0	45.6	17.8	48.3	19.3	22.8
1-13 weeks	8.9	2.6	6.4	2.2	7.0	2.3	2.8
14-26 weeks	9.8	3.4	7.1	3.3	7.7	3.3	3.9
27-39 weeks	5.8	5.3	6.5	4.4	6.3	4.4	4.7
40-52 weeks	17.0	50.7	34.3	72.3	30.7	70.7	65.9
				Number			
Median weeks for those who worked	31.6	45.1	42.7	45.6	42.1	45.6	45.4

Source: Computed from (35).

employment is not an available means to increase income. For others it could be if daycare, further education or job training, or other services were available.

Comparison with White Family Householders

Poor black householders were less likely to be employed than were the nonpoor. The poor black householders who were employed in 1979 worked slightly fewer weeks than did the nonpoor. And, nearly all of the black householders who were not in the labor force, regardless of poverty status, had human capital characteristics which limited or prevented employment. The same was true for poor and nonpoor white family householders; labor-force status, weeks worked, and characteristics of those not in the labor force were strikingly similar to those characteristics of their black counterparts (tables 7, 9, and 10).

However, there are major differences in the unemployment rates and occupational distributions of black and white family householders. The overall unemployment rate for white householders was 3.8 percent, compared with 7.2 percent for black householders (table 7). This higher unemployment rate is due primarily to the high unemployment rate for poor black female householders (19.7 percent). Although the 16.7-percent unemployment rate for poor white female householders was not much lower, black female householders constitute a much larger percentage of all black family householders and have a larger effect on the overall black unemployment rate than white female householders have on the overall rate for whites.

Employed white female householders are less concentrated in low-wage service occupations than are blacks (table 8). A larger percentage of white women are in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations. Although not service jobs, these are still generally low-wage, traditionally female, occupations. White "other" householders are less concentrated in operator, fabricator, and laborer occupations than are blacks. A higher percentage of white "other" householders hold professional and managerial or precision jobs than do blacks, perhaps due to the higher educational attainment of whites.

Table 10—Selected characteristics of family householders not in the labor force, nonmetro South, 1980

Race and selected characteristics	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black householders not in the labor force	102.0	57.7	88.0	102.5	190.0	160.2	350.2
				Percent			
Characteristic:[1]							
65 years old or older	24.9	51.1	53.2	56.9	38.0	54.8	45.7
Work-preventing disability	19.1	20.8	22.6	23.7	20.7	22.6	21.6
Work-limiting disability	4.4	2.4	2.6	2.0	3.6	2.1	2.9
Less than 5 years of education	3.8	2.6	5.1	2.1	4.4	2.3	3.5
Single parent with preschool child	25.1	5.4	.3	.1	13.6	2.0	8.3
5-11 years of education	17.0	13.5	11.8	9.6	14.6	11.0	12.9
None of the above	5.7	4.2	4.3	5.6	5.1	5.1	5.1
				Thousand			
White householders not in the labor force	84.0	152.7	247.0	979.0	331.0	1,131.7	1,462.7
				Percent			
Characteristic:[1]							
65 years old or older	26.0	60.5	50.7	58.5	44.5	58.8	55.6
Work-preventing disability	20.8	13.5	28.9	22.9	26.9	21.6	22.8
Work-limiting disability	3.9	1.7	3.3	2.2	3.4	2.1	2.4
Less than 5 years of education	2.6	1.8	2.3	.7	2.4	.9	1.2
Single parent with preschool child	21.0	2.6	.3	**	5.5	.4	1.5
5-11 years of education	16.0	11.5	9.3	6.5	11.0	7.1	8.0
None of the above	9.6	8.3	5.1	9.1	6.3	9.0	8.4

[1]Characteristics are not mutually exclusive groups. So that a person does not appear in more than one category, each category takes precedence over all those below it.
** = Less than 0.1 percent.
Source: Computed from (35).

Adult Black Family Members

Although family householders provide the majority of family income, adult members other than the householder provided about a third of poor black families' income in the nonmetro South in 1979 (table 4). The human capital characteristics and labor-force status of adult family members are then important in analyzing the income-earning capacity of these families. As in the discussion of householders, black family members are discussed first, followed by comparisons with white family members.

Relationship to the Householder

Regardless of poverty status, 70 percent of the adult members of black female householder families are children of the householder, indicating the low level of human capital most of these members bring to the labor market (fig. 7). The average age of these householders is about 48, so most of their children would be under 25 years old, with many under 19.

The distributions of adult members in poor and nonpoor "other" householder families are also identical. Fifty-four percent of adult family members of both groups are spouses of the householders and another 36 percent are their children.

Age

As would be expected from the youth of many poor black female householders, members of their families are also very young. Seventy percent of the adult members of these families were between 16 and 24 years old (fig. 8). Most adult members of nonpoor female householder families were under 25, but a larger percentage fell in the 25- to 34-year-old category.

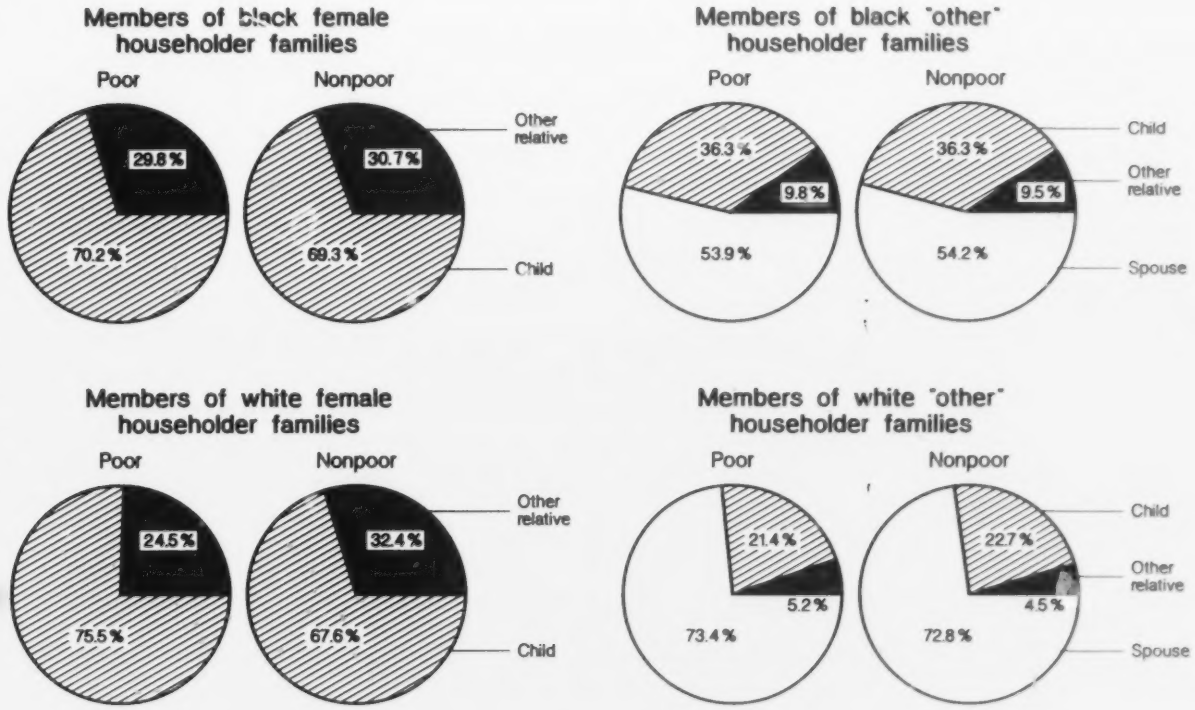
Adult members of poor black "other" householder families are more evenly distributed among the age categories. However, 40 percent were under 25 and another 13 percent were 65 or older.

Education

This age distribution is reflected in the years of schooling completed by adult family members (fig. 9). A lower percentage of poor than nonpoor black family members completed high school. Many adult family members in black female householder families are not old enough to have completed high

Figure 7

Relationship of adult family members to the householder, nonmetro South, 1980



Source: Computed from (*35*).

school. In the "other" family group, the large percentage of black family members with limited education reflects the low educational attainment of older blacks in the nonmetro South. However, regardless of the age of the person, if high school graduation is a prerequisite to employment, a much smaller percentage of poor black family members would qualify than would their nonpoor counterparts.

Work Disability

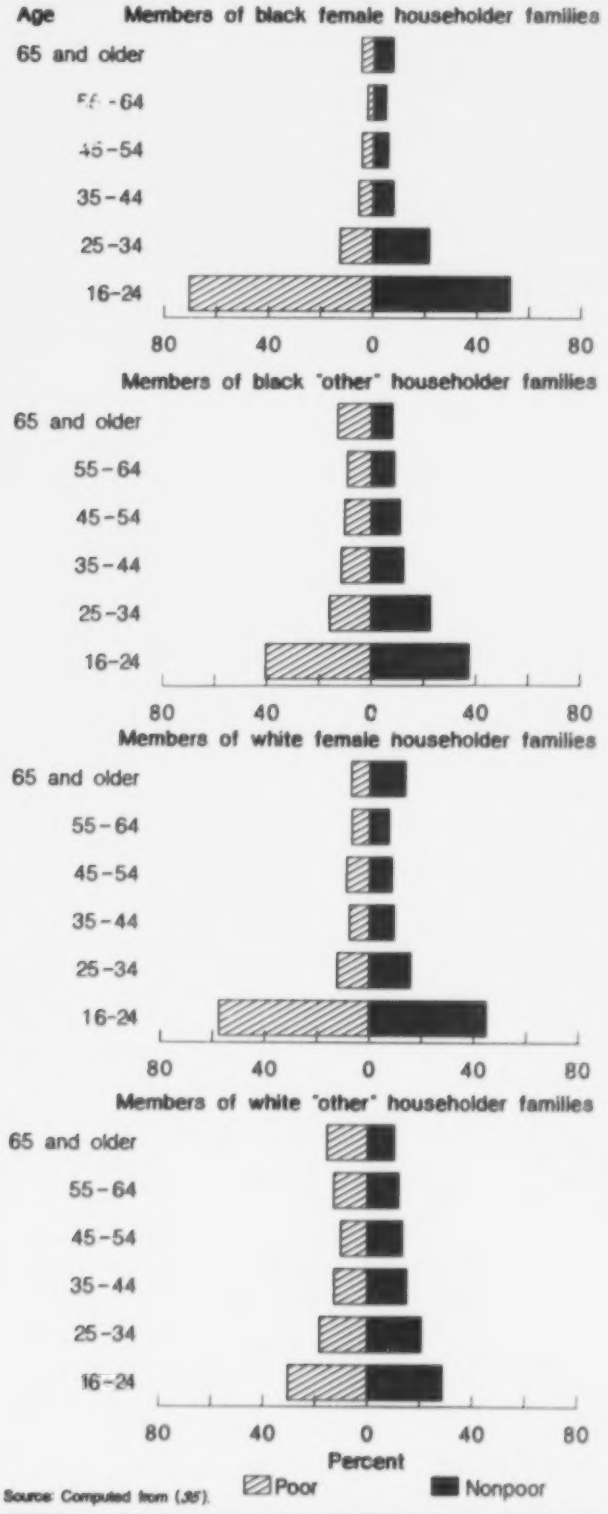
Work disability is also a problem for some poor black "other" family members of working age; 11 percent were prevented from working and an additional 4 percent had work-limiting disabilities (table 11). Working-age members of black female householder families have the same incidence of disability regardless of poverty status—about 8 percent were prevented from working.

Labor-Force Status

As would be expected from their lower average age and educational attainment and their higher disability rate, poor black family members are not as likely to participate in the labor force as are nonpoor family members. About 67 percent of poor black female householder family members and 70 percent of poor black "other" family members are not in the labor force (table 12). About 40 percent of nonpoor family members are not in the labor force.

Poor black family members also appear to have a harder time finding employment than do nonpoor black family members. The unemployment rate shows that 34 percent of members of poor black female householder families and 23 percent of members of poor black "other" families who are in the labor force cannot find a job, compared with 14

Figure 8
Age distribution of adult family members, nonmetro South, 1980



Source: Computed from (35).

percent for nonpoor black female householder family members and 10 percent for nonpoor black "other" householder family members.

Occupations of the Employed

The majority of employed black family members, whether poor or nonpoor, were concentrated in service, or operator, fabricator, and laborer occupations (table 13). Nonpoor "other" family members were somewhat less concentrated in these occupations than were members of the remaining groups, and were more likely to hold managerial and professional jobs. The majority of these adult family members are spouses in married-couple families. Spouses are similar to the householder in age and education, and therefore, are more likely than the adult members of female householder families (mostly children of the householder) to have better jobs.

Although the percentages are not large, members of poor black families are more likely than nonpoor black family members to be employed in farming, forestry, or fishing occupations, 10.5 percent of the poor compared with 3.5 percent of the nonpoor. Poor black family members are also more concentrated in service occupations than are the nonpoor.

Weeks Worked in 1979

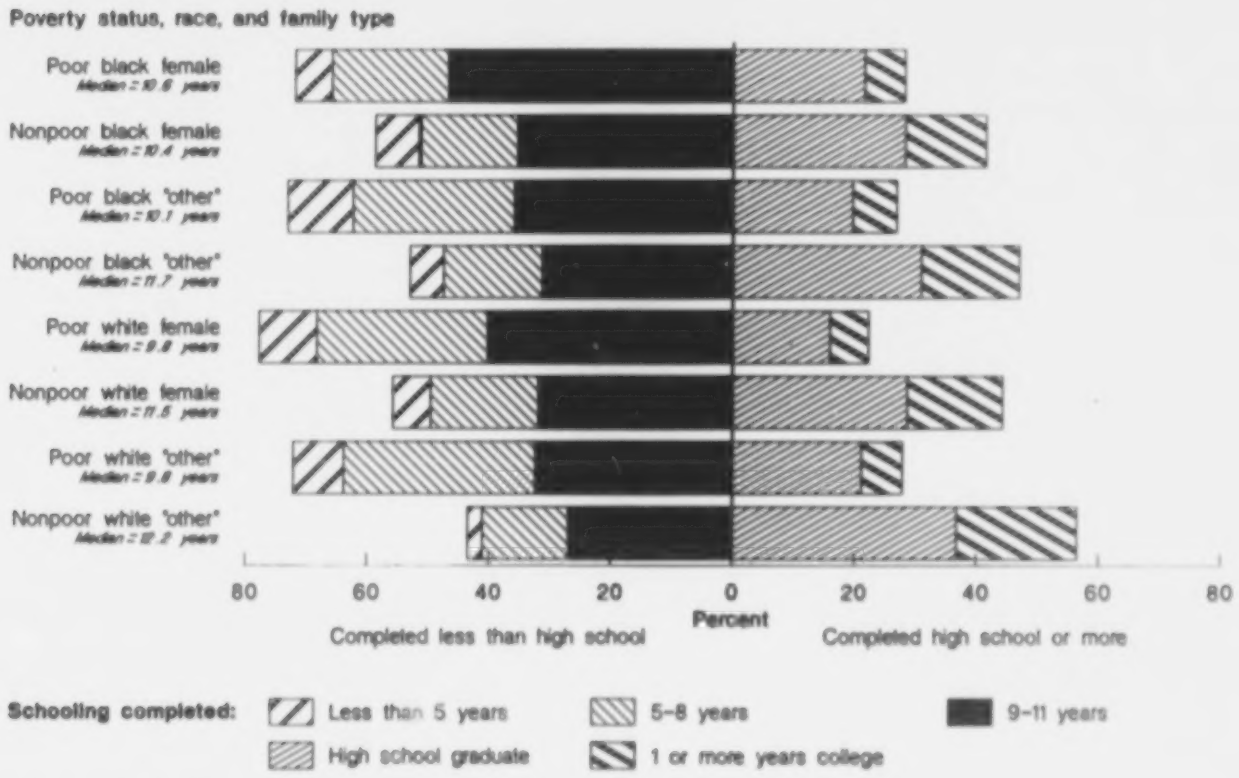
The number of weeks worked by adult black family members also indicates their contribution to family income. Nonpoor black family members had a higher incidence of working 40 to 52 weeks; 37 percent of those in female householder families and 41 percent of those in "other" householder families (table 14). This contrasts sharply with the poor black family members' weeks worked: only 9 percent of those in female householder families and 11 percent of those in "other" householder families worked 40 to 52 weeks. The high incidence of the poor not having worked at all in 1979 also points to the small effect of family members on the income of many poor families. With only about 30 percent of adult family members working, earned income for many poor families depended largely on the householder working.

Those Not in the Labor Force

As in the case of family householders, there are valid reasons why many adult black family members are not in the labor force. Many of them are under 19 years old and in school. Some are totally disabled, and others are 65 years old or older. These three groups account for 63 percent of

Figure 9

Education of adult family members, nonmetro South, 1980



Source: Computed from (35).

Table 11—Work disability of working-age family members, nonmetro South, 1980

Race and work disability	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Black family members, 16 to 64 years old	175.8	205.4	263.2	808.6	439.0	1,014.0	1,453.0
				Percent			
Work disability:							
None	88.5	88.3	84.7	91.5	86.2	90.9	89.5
Work limiting	3.0	3.9	4.1	3.3	3.7	3.4	3.5
Work preventing	8.5	7.8	11.2	5.2	10.1	5.7	7.0
				Thousand			
White family members, 16 to 64 years old	87.6	324.8	582.1	5,482.1	669.7	5,806.9	6,476.6
				Percent			
Work disability:							
None	79.2	85.4	82.7	91.5	82.2	91.2	90.3
Work limiting	5.6	4.5	4.2	3.4	4.4	3.4	3.5
Work preventing	15.3	10.1	13.1	5.1	13.4	5.4	6.2

Source: Computed from (35).

Table 12—Labor-force status of adult family members, nonmetro South, 1980

Race and labor-force status	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Adult black family members	184.6	221.8	302.4	877.9	487.0	1,099.7	1,586.7
				Percent			
Labor-force status:							
In the labor force—							
Employed	22.0	48.2	23.2	53.5	22.8	52.4	43.3
Unemployed	11.3	7.7	6.9	6.2	8.6	6.5	7.2
Not in the labor force	66.6	44.0	69.9	40.3	68.6	41.0	49.5
Unemployment rate[1]	33.9	13.8	23.1	10.4	27.4	11.1	14.2
				Thousand			
Adult white family members	94.3	375.8	689.8	6,107.8	784.1	6,483.6	7,267.7
				Percent			
Labor-force status:							
In the labor force—							
Employed	23.4	50.6	20.2	47.1	20.6	47.3	44.3
Unemployed	9.1	6.2	4.3	3.5	4.9	3.7	3.8
Not in the labor force	67.4	43.1	75.4	49.4	74.5	49.0	51.8
Unemployment rate[1]	28.0	10.9	17.6	7.0	19.2	7.3	8.0

[1]The unemployment rate is total unemployed divided by total in the labor force.
Source: Computed from (35).

Table 13—Occupations of employed adult family members, nonmetro South, 1980[1]

Race and occupation	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Employed black family members	40.4	106.6	69.9	467.3	110.3	573.9	684.2
				Percent			
Occupation:							
Managerial/professional	5.4	7.9	5.7	12.6	5.6	11.7	10.8
Technical/sales/administrative support	10.1	13.6	9.2	15.1	9.5	14.8	13.9
Service	32.2	20.4	34.8	24.6	33.8	23.8	25.4
Farming/forestry/fishing	10.9	5.7	10.3	3.0	10.5	3.5	4.6
Precision craft/repair/production	3.5	7.5	4.9	5.8	4.4	6.1	5.8
Operators/fabricators/laborers	37.9	44.9	35.2	38.9	36.2	40.0	39.4
				Thousand			
Employed white family members	22.1	190.0	139.5	2,869.9	161.6	3,059.9	3,221.5
				Percent			
Occupation:							
Managerial/professional	3.2	10.1	7.6	16.9	7.0	16.5	16.0
Technical/sales/administrative support	16.3	23.0	23.5	36.7	22.5	36.0	35.3
Service	24.9	13.4	24.5	13.6	24.6	13.6	14.1
Farming/forestry/fishing	12.2	5.8	10.2	3.1	10.5	3.3	3.6
Precision craft/repair/production	12.7	13.6	5.4	6.3	6.4	6.8	6.8
Operators/fabricators/laborers	30.8	32.1	28.7	23.4	29.0	23.9	24.2

[1]Employed in the civilian labor force.
Source: Computed from (35).

Table 14—Weeks worked by adult family members, nonmetro South, 1979

Race and weeks worked in 1979	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Adult black family members	184.6	221.8	302.4	877.9	487.0	1,099.7	1,586.7
				Percent			
Weeks worked:							
None	67.0	39.2	70.4	37.1	69.1	37.6	47.3
1-13 weeks	13.0	9.2	10.2	7.4	11.3	7.8	8.9
14-26 weeks	6.9	7.5	5.1	6.8	5.7	7.0	6.6
27-39 weeks	3.7	7.4	3.3	8.1	3.4	8.0	6.6
40-52 weeks	9.4	36.7	11.0	40.5	10.4	39.7	30.7
				Number			
Median weeks for those who worked	20.6	42.2	25.8	42.9	23.4	42.8	41.8
				Thousand			
Adult white family members	94.3	375.8	689.8	6,107.8	784.1	6,483.6	7,267.7
				Percent			
Weeks worked:							
None	63.2	37.0	72.9	42.6	71.7	42.2	45.4
1-13 weeks	16.1	8.6	9.0	7.8	10.0	7.8	8.0
14-26 weeks	8.2	9.1	5.9	7.5	6.2	7.5	7.4
27-39 weeks	4.7	7.3	2.9	6.7	3.1	6.8	6.4
40-52 weeks	7.8	37.9	9.3	35.5	9.1	35.6	32.8
				Number			
Median weeks for those who worked	17.6	42.2	24.1	42.5	23.2	42.5	42.2

Source: Computed from (35).

members of poor black female householder families and 56 percent of poor black "other" householder family members who are not in the labor force (table 15). When the remaining circumstances are also considered, about 68 percent of all black family members who were not in the labor force appear to have some work-inhibiting characteristic.

Comparison with Adult Members of White Families

While the characteristics of black and white householders were quite similar, the characteristics of their adult family members were more divergent. In every type of family (except poor female householder families), the median age of white adult family members was at least 3 years higher than that of black family members (fig. 8). In poor black female householder families, 70 percent of the members were under 25 years old, compared with 57 percent of members of poor white female householder families (fig. 8). Fewer members of poor black families were in the prime income-earning age categories than were poor white family members.

Black family members are more equal to white family members in years of education than are black and white householders. While median education of nonpoor black family members is lower than that of nonpoor white family members, poor black family members have a higher median education than poor white family members (fig. 9). Although the median for all groups except white nonpoor "other" family members was less than high school graduation, many members of these families were still in school.

Black family members had much higher unemployment rates than did whites in all poverty status and family type categories (table 12). Unemployment, coupled with the concentration of employed black family members in low-wage occupations (table 13), demonstrates the difficulty some black family members have in finding employment to help bring family income above the poverty level.

Table 15—Selected characteristics of adult family members not in the labor force, nonmetro South, 1980

Race and selected characteristics	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
			Thousand				
Adult black family members not in the labor force	123.0	97.7	211.3	353.6	334.3	451.3	785.6
			Percent				
Characteristic:[1]							
65 years old or older	6.7	15.5	17.8	17.1	13.7	16.7	15.4
Work-preventing disability	12.2	16.4	13.9	11.9	13.3	12.9	13.0
Work-limiting disability	2.0	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.0
Less than 5 years of education	1.5	.9	3.0	2.1	2.4	1.9	2.1
In school	43.9	38.8	23.9	31.4	31.3	33.0	32.3
Spouse with preschool child	NA	NA	10.6	8.7	6.7	6.8	6.8
5-11 years of education	20.2	13.9	18.5	14.7	19.1	14.5	16.5
None of the above	13.4	12.7	10.3	12.0	11.5	12.1	11.8
			Thousand				
Adult white family members not in the labor force	63.6	162.1	520.3	3,016.5	583.9	3,178.6	3,762.5
			Percent				
Characteristic:[1]							
65 years old or older	10.2	29.2	20.1	19.0	19.0	19.5	19.4
Work-preventing disability	21.1	20.2	14.7	9.2	15.4	9.8	10.7
Work-limiting disability	3.1	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.3
Less than 5 years of education	3.1	.7	3.1	1.1	3.1	1.1	1.4
In school	29.4	27.1	11.9	15.9	13.8	16.5	16.1
Spouse with preschool child	NA	NA	17.4	15.8	15.5	15.0	15.1
5-11 years of education	24.4	10.1	21.0	16.7	21.4	16.3	17.1
None of the above	8.6	9.9	9.5	20.1	9.4	19.6	18.0

NA = Not applicable.
[1]Characteristics are not mutually exclusive groups. So that a person does not appear in more than one category, each category takes precedence over all those below it.
Source: Computed from (35).

Conclusions

Southern nonmetro black families, especially female householder families, continue to have a high incidence of poverty. However, poor black householders and other adult family members exhibit human capital characteristics similar to those of poor whites. This suggests that measures to increase work-related skills would improve the income situation of both groups.

Factors associated with poverty among black families include low educational attainment, high unemployment rates, low-wage occupations, and lack of participation in the labor force. Educational attainment of black family householders is lower than that of white family householders. Part of this disparity may be due to the low educational attainment of older black householders. Many black householders in the nonmetro South need additional education and work-related training to compete in the job market. Their family members are becoming better educated, so future needs for remedial education may be reduced. However, not only is nonmetro black educational attainment lower than that of nonmetro whites, but educational attainment of nonmetro residents is lower than that of metro residents (14). Therefore, if poor blacks in the nonmetro South are to compete in the national labor market, they will have to increase their schooling even more to match that of metro residents.

Expectations that better education will result in a more skilled labor force and a higher wage economy have led many Southern States to reform their education systems. Many of those States have recently instituted more stringent teacher certification testing, increased the number of high school credits necessary for graduation, increased teacher salaries, and raised per-pupil expenditures (24).

The high unemployment rates for black family members in general and for poor blacks in particular show that the local economies were not able to provide enough employment or employment appropriate to these persons' skills. The 1890 Land Grant Institutions' survey found that lack of

employment opportunities was a serious problem in low-income areas of the rural South (12). The survey also found that racial discrimination is still perceived as a hindrance in finding employment.

Blacks in the nonmetro South are affected both by policies that affect the distribution of jobs and by policies that affect national economic structure and growth. The concentration of nonmetro blacks in service and laborer occupations demonstrates not only the lower skill levels among poor blacks but also the inability of local economies to provide advancement into more specialized, higher paying occupations. Rural development initiatives could be undertaken to attract business and industry to nonmetro areas with poverty and employment problems. Economic development programs, such as the proposed Enterprise Zones (which would offer tax incentives to industries locating or expanding in depressed areas), might attract new jobs to chronically low-income areas (20). However, the effects of such programs might be mitigated by structural changes in the U.S. economy such as the recent decline in manufacturing employment. Many nonmetro communities in the South depend on manufacturing for their economic base.

Job training may also be necessary for the poor, especially the unemployed, those employed in low-wage occupations, and those not in the labor force who are poorly educated, because new businesses with higher paying jobs are not likely to locate in areas with an under-trained labor force (1). If lack of child care keeps single parents from working, then public or private daycare could also facilitate employment.

Improvements in public assistance programs would benefit those unable to work or increase the amount of work they are doing. A study of participation in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program found that only about 55 percent of the elderly who are eligible to participate in the program (39). If many poor elderly black householders are among these eligible nonparticipants, then SSI participation could increase their incomes.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is a joint Federal/State program designed to assist poor female householder families. Each State establishes its own needs standard (amount of money a family needs to meet a predetermined standard of living) and payment standard (amount of the needs standard the State will provide). These needs standards vary by size of family and other family characteristics. However, the payment standard in each State reflects, among other factors, the State's ability to finance the program and its philosophy about such support. The Southern States generally have the lowest AFDC payments in the Nation. There have been proposals to provide a single set of national minimum-benefit levels—most proposals having benefits considerably above those currently paid in the South. If such a proposal were implemented, the incomes of many poor female householder families in the nonmetro South would be improved.

The recently enacted child-support law should increase the incomes of many female householder families. This law provides national enforcement of judicially assessed child-support payments, including the right of the courts to order employers to withhold child-support money from paychecks of fathers who are delinquent in their payments (4). However, a much lower percentage of divorced black women are awarded child support compared with the percentage of white women awarded support (11), so the prospects for many nonmetro black women receiving payments due to this law may be lower than those of white women.

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Appendix table 1—Poverty status of families by race and residence, 1980

Region and residence	U.S. families		Black families		White families	
	All	Percentage poor	All	Percentage poor	All	Percentage poor
	Thousand	*Percent*	*Thousand*	*Percent*	*Thousand*	*Percent*
U.S. total	59,190.1	9.6	6,105.7	26.5	50,644.9	7.0
Metro	43,918.9	8.7	5,006.8	24.7	36,840.1	6.0
Nonmetro	15,271.2	12.0	1,098.9	34.3	13,804.8	9.9
Northeast	12,731.6	8.7	1,136.8	25.3	11,167.7	6.2
Metro	10,788.7	8.8	1,118.8	25.3	9,256.1	5.9
Nonmetro	1,942.9	8.1	18.0	21.4	1,911.6	7.9
Midwest	15,424.5	8.0	1,234.9	24.6	13,921.1	6.3
Metro	10,817.6	7.5	1,189.2	24.6	9,409.4	5.1
Nonmetro	4,606.9	9.2	45.8	24.7	4,511.7	8.8
South	20,009.7	11.9	3,201.0	28.6	16,318.1	8.4
Metro	13,274.8	10.1	2,179.3	25.6	10,712.3	6.7
Nonmetro	6,734.9	15.5	1,021.7	35.1	5,605.9	11.7
West	11,024.3	8.5	533.0	20.3	9,237.9	6.7
Metro	9,037.8	8.1	519.5	20.3	7,462.3	6.2
Nonmetro	1,986.5	10.4	13.4	22.8	1,775.6	8.7

Source: (34).

Appendix table 2—Persons by family status, nonmetro South, 1980

Family status and relationship to householder	Total population		Blacks		Whites	
	Number	*Percent*	*Number*	*Percent*	*Number*	*Percent*
Total persons	25,005,370	100.0	4,632,117	100.0	19,867,549	100.0
In families	22,150,888	88.6	4,092,778	88.4	17,611,875	88.6
Householder	6,710,942	26.8	1,013,372	21.9	5,590,449	28.1
Spouse	5,616,141	22.5	619,901	13.4	4,901,970	24.7
Child	8,444,015	33.8	1,894,882	40.9	6,339,920	31.9
Other relative	1,379,790	5.5	564,623	12.2	779,536	3.9
Not in families	2,854,482	11.4	539,339	11.6	2,255,674	11.4
Householder	1,874,528	7.5	311,992	6.7	1,538,300	7.7
Nonrelative	360,374	1.4	85,096	1.8	262,694	1.3
In group quarters	619,580	2.5	142,251	3.1	454,680	2.3

Source: (33).

Appendix table 3—Families by source of income, nonmetro South, 1979

Race and source of income	Female householder		"Other" householder		All families		
	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Poor	Nonpoor	Total
				Thousand			
Total black families	179.8	145.7	181.0	513.0	360.8	658.7	1,019.5
				Percent			
With income from:[1]							
Earnings[2]	57.5	89.8	65.1	93.9	61.3	93.0	81.8
Interest, dividends, or rentals[2]	1.9	7.3	3.3	10.5	2.6	9.8	3.6
Social Security	26.4	39.2	37.7	23.8	32.1	27.2	28.9
Public assistance	55.2	33.2	29.9	13.3	42.5	17.7	26.5
Other sources	18.0	27.2	16.1	22.4	17.0	23.5	21.2
				Thousand			
Total white families	139.1	362.9	529.3	4,568.2	668.4	4,931.1	5,599.5
				Percent			
With income from:[1]							
Earnings[2]	55.3	85.5	63.0	89.9	61.4	89.6	86.2
Interest, dividends, or rentals[2]	5.5	30.2	12.2	37.4	10.8	36.9	33.8
Social Security	28.0	45.7	35.0	24.1	33.5	25.7	26.6
Public assistance	38.1	15.1	17.9	4.1	22.1	4.9	7.0
Other sources	23.0	39.5	15.7	24.3	17.2	25.4	24.4

[1]Categories are not mutually exclusive. Families may have income from multiple sources.
[2]Includes families with net losses.
Source: Computed from (35).

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